Chapter 5

Video Heads and Rewound Bodies: Cyborg Memories in Rodrigo Fresán and Alberto Fuguet

Throughout this book posthuman and cyborg realities have always been "about" something else, from surviving dictatorship to not surviving in neoliberalism. In this final chapter I examine a series of articulations of the posthuman that are merely what they are, cyborged subjectivities constructing "like" places to inhabit without much reflection on what caused their appearance. The posthumans that appear in the novels of Rodrigo Fresán and Alberto Fuguet appear as remarkable and unremarkable bodies existing within glocal matrices in highly individualized attempts to construct meaning. In so doing and being, these bodies appear in sharp contrast to the politicized posthumans that occupy Fresán and Fuguet's literary compatriot Paz Soldán's narrative. The figures that flit through *Mantra* (2001) and *Por favor, rebobinar* (1998) appear as the realities of the age, they are posthuman because there is not another way to be and are interested in the construction of memories and mythologies that explain an existence not obviously marked by political trauma.

By making this argument I situate these novels within the sometimes ferocious criticism leveled at Fuguet's McOndo movement, criticisms that left Fuguet unwilling to republish the anthology of short stories that gave the group its name and that included work by Fresán and Paz Soldán among various twenty- and thirty-something male writers from Latin America

J. A. Brown, *Cyborgs in Latin America*

and Spain. The writers embraced, or appeared to embrace, the then new global realities of 1990s neoliberal Latin America, rebelling against stereotypes of Latin America as rural and magical as well as against traditions of committed political narrative. Such a characterization led to much of the criticism of the movement, with other critics and writers offended by the call to move on from the narratives and themes that examine and review the trauma of the dictatorships and postdictatorships found in many Latin American countries.[1] Most of the authors who have been associated with McOndo (principally because they published a story in the anthology) have, however, included the themes of global culture, new technology, and a highly developed individualism that have been rejected in some circles. Because of the interest in precisely these themes we also see various articulations of posthuman identity, as previous analysis in this book has hopefully made clear. Paz Soldán's focus on new technologies and the posthuman acts as one particularly potent argument against those that would dismiss the McOndo writers as apolitical or as guilty of assent by silence.

As I suggested earlier, the cases of Rodrigo Fresán and Alberto Fuguet provide another perspective to Latin American posthuman identity. In both *Mantra* and *Por favor, rebobinar*, we see articulations of posthuman identity that begin with the cyborg reality of technological bodies and then situate them not within a history of dictatorship or a present of political and economic abuses but as a reality that requires new mythologies and different ways of remembering individual experience. What these novels show in the context of the present study is the extent to which posthuman realities have become integrated within Latin American narrative and cultural expression, beyond narrative genre and beyond social and political ideologies, and how the cyborg body has gained traction as an important vehicle for the exploration of a variety of sometimes competing ideas and themes.

Mantra is part of the Mondadori series Año 0 where various novelists were asked to write novels about, and I quote from the series description, "algunas de las ciudades más importantes del mundo" [some of the most important cities in the world].

Fresán chooses Mexico City, following the example of his friend and mentor Roberto Bolaño's award-winning novel *Los detectives salvajes* [The Savage Detectives]. Fresán's novel presents a series of interwoven narratives, narrated in first person by various characters. In the first, Martín Mantra's childhood friend, who came to Mexico City as a young Argentine during the 1970s, reflects on his experiences with Mantra as he comes to terms with a brain tumor that looks, to him, like a "sea monkey," a reference to the comic book ads the two read when they were young. In the second, a new narrator, this time French, is a cadaver who is reminiscing as his body is expatriated from Mexico to France. In the last, a robot from the future searches among the ruins of Mexico City for evidence of Mantrax, now an historical figure and near deity. Throughout all the narratives we see a series of attempts to understand culture, both Mexican and global, as the conglomeration of popular discourses and especially television and film. Edmundo Paz Soldán has characterized the novel in this way: "*Mantra*... se anima a explorar qué es lo que ocurre a la psiquis del individuo, y al género novelístico, cuando estos son sometidos a una descarga múltiple y continua de información a través de medios como el cine, las revistas y, por supuesto, la televisión" (108) [*Mantra* explores what it is that happens to the psyche of the individual and the genre of the novel when they are subjected to a multiple and continuous download of information through media such as film, magazines, and, of course, television]. I would argue that as a function of this exploration of mass-media culture we find a literary reconfiguration of the cyborg figure that displaces it from its tortured position in the Argentine literary tradition and resituates it as the basis for the construction of a new cultural imaginary. What we see is an attempt to imagine a new mythology, a new set of stories, that explains the posthuman fusion of organic flesh and technological apparatus that constitutes subjectivity in the novel.

At this point in our study, it seems appropriate to stir in theories of being and media that we find in Marshall McLuhan's work. As we do so we follow on theorizations of the posthuman that we explored in Courtoisie's narrative, but this time with more of a focus on those subjectivities that function ably within

the media-based imaginaries rather than those that fail to integrate (as was so evident in the case of *Tajos*). To arrive at this quotidian fusion of mass media and the posthuman, we begin with Haraway's revolutionary mode of cyborg identity, we continue through the evolutionary process that Hayles describes, and end in a state of posthumanity so ubiquitous as to seek a theoretical grounding in a theorist who used media and identity theory not so much to describe what will happen or what is about to happen but rather to describe what has already happened. McLuhan brings (or actually brought, well before the work of Hayles and Haraway) the idea that this type of identity appears especially when humans and the technological delivery systems of the mass media share "informational patterns" and televisions and cameras function as fundamental prostheses for identity. These "new organs," according to McLuhan's Laws of Media, constitute real extensions of a human identity configured in the fusion between human body and technological media apparatus (96–97).

The narrator with the sea-monkey tumor suggests, near the beginning of the novel, a new way to conceive of memory and biography. He muses:

> En el futuro todos seremos directores de cine, todos filmaremos películas de nuestras vidas. Pienso en una mañana cinematográficamente autobiograforme. . . .
>
> El olvido será olvidado y ya no sabremos lo que es la memoria ni sus deformaciones que todo lo complican. Ya no recordaremos nuestro pasado como si fuera una película, porque nuestro pasado *será* una película de la que seremos primero protagonistas para poder ser espectadores después. (67)
>
> In the future we will all be film directors, we will all make films of our lives. I am thinking of a tomorrow cinematographically autobiograformed. . . . Forgetting will be forgotten and we will no longer know what memory is nor its deformations that complicate everything. We will no longer remember our past as if it were a film, because our past will be a film in which we will first be protagonists in order to then become spectators.

The dynamic here is intriguing, not only for the idea of lives as literal films but for the way that the idea is presented as a solution

for organic failure. The act of forgetting is presented as a malfunction of memory; a concept inherently flawed in and of itself as it constitutes an act that deforms the past instead of documenting it. As a solution to those failures, film serves as a prosthetic brain that stores faithfully recorded images and sounds of the past. But not only do we see a reconfiguration of the human body as both organic and mechanical, possessing human life and the mechanical ability to record and store audio-visual data, we also see a multiplication of identity that further erodes the idea of a single human subject. The human is simultaneously a writer, actor, and director in this new situation, and is then converted into spectator when accessing the celluloid memories that the filmic life has produced.

The novel follows this line of thinking to its logical conclusions in the figure of Martín Mantra, the namesake of the novel though never a narrator. In a subsequent section, the boy makes an appearance as the dead narrator remembers meeting him for the first time:

> Se abre una puerta y entonces entra un niño raro, con una cabeza enorme que se mueve al caminar, como si apenas estuviera pegada al cuerpo. Al acercarse me doy cuenta que no es exactamente su cabeza sino un gigantesco casco con luces y lentes de filmadora con luces parpadeantes lo que le hace parecer deforme y extra-terrestre. Hace mucho ruido. Adentro de todo eso sonríe su cabecita. El niño me enfoca y sonríe. "Siempre quise conocer a alguien enmascaradamente luchadoriforme," me dice. (202)
>
> A door opens and a strange boy enters, with an enormous head that moves as he walks, as if it were barely attached to his body. As he approaches me, I realize that it isn't exactly his head, it's a giant helmet with lights and film lenses with blinking lights that make him seem deformed and alien. It makes a lot of noise. Inside all of this, his little head smiles. The boy focuses on me and smiles. "I always wanted to meet someone maskedly wrestlerformed" he says.

Mantra is the future that our sea-monkey narrator foresaw, a person who constantly films what he lives and who does so thanks to the technological apparatus that he constantly wears. Note how this narrator's reactions to the boy confirm the

posthuman nature of the relationship between child and media-prosthesis. The helmet is first interpreted as an odd, but organic, head. It is only upon closer inspection that differences between the helmet and the boy are made clear. Nevertheless, Mantra's behavior is described as based on technology. His helmet makes him, all of him, differently formed, even alien, and when he looks at the narrator he does not merely look; he focuses: his attention and his shot-selection process are one and the same.

The dead narrator was a masked *luchador* [wrestler], and Mantra's fascination with that particular aspect helps us appreciate the service to which these posthuman images are put in the novel. While the man that reads the boy as alien does not share the same bio-technological configuration, Mantra does perceive an identity that extends beyond the organic. The boy's description of the narrator as "enmascaradamente luchadoriforme" names the man both as his profession and as his mask, elements that are prosthetic to the person's identity. Furthermore, the way in which Mantra takes two nouns, "máscara" and "luchador" and adverbizes or adjectivizes them suggests a subjectivity based on process rather than location. The combination of this kind of identity in flux between costume, technological prosthesis, and human body adds to the posthuman imaginary that is presented throughout the novel as it simultaneously relates it to Mexican popular culture and particularly to the successful Santos and Blue Demon films.

It is at this point that we appreciate the other thrust of the novel when it comes to the presentation of new kinds of human beings: that is, the attempt to rewrite mythology so as to include a genesis story of the posthumans and televisual cyborgs that populate a modern Mexico perceived by foreign eyes. The section of the novel devoted to the dead French wrestler begins with "Así, creo yo, es como empiezan las mejores religiones" and continues with a series of musings about the importance of science fiction for the creation of a national identity, with emphasis on the importance of Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*. These musings are especially revealing as they intersect with Mexican history. At one point, we see a recital of the conquest of Mexico that culminates in a series of descriptions of maps and of their study. As the stream of consciousness connections

build, we find the following series of historical figures engaged in cartographic contemplation:

> Retratos de personas mirando mapas: Julio César, Hernán Cortés, Napoleón, Adolf Hitler, Darth Vader. . . . Hay algo de conquistador en todo aquel que mira un mapa (al mirar un mapa miramos desde las alturas de un dios) y hay algo de conquistador también en la primera vez que miramos mapa de la isla del Tesoro (trazado por Robert Louis Stevenson a partir del contorno de un estanque en una plaza frente a su casa en Edimburgo) o de la Tierra Media (porque J.R.R. Tolkien necesitaba todo un mundo donde poner el idioma que venía inventando desde los ocho años). (245)
>
> Portraits of people looking at maps: Julius Caesar, Hernando Cortés, Napoleon, Adolph Hitler, Darth Vader. . . . There is something of conqueror in anyone that looks at a map (when we look at a map, we look from the perspective of a god) and there is something of a conqueror in us the first time we look at a map of Treasure Island (drawn by Robert Louis Stevenson by the side of a pond in a park in front of his house in Edinburgh) or of Middle Earth (because J.R.R. Tolkien needed an entire world in which he could put the language that he had been inventing since he was eight years old.

By situating these ruminations at the end of a long recounting of Mexican history and by including Hernán Cortés and "conquistador" in the passage, we see a juxtaposition of the staples of Mexican history with important figures of Western history and, of course, Darth Vader. The fact that we, as readers, ape Caesar and Cortés when we look at maps of Treasure Island and Middle Earth underscores the way in which the popular culture that feeds our childhoods contributes to the formation of this kind of hybridized identity, one made cybernetic not only by the heavily cyborged figures that populate *Mantra* but also by the fact that our list of historical figures culminates in Darth Vader, popular culture's best known cyborg. By sensing the presence of the infamous conquerors in the list in the construction of Vader and combining that with the fact that Darth Vader's dependence on a mask makes him, unwittingly, especially appropriate for adoption into a Mexican

mythological imaginary, we see how Fresán suggests a new popular mythology that generates the cybernetic figures that run through the novel.

The novel's end, a robot's search for his origin, brings all of these threads into another hybrid whole. This section begins as follows:

> He aquí el relato que solían relatar los viejos:
>
> «En un cierto tiempo que ya nadie puede contar, del que ya nadie puede acordarse . . . un día llegó caminando un hombre que se decía mitad momia y mitad metal a "Mexico City is known to Mexicans simple as México—pronounced 'MEH-kee-ko.' If they want to distinguish from Mexico the country they call it either 'la ciudad de México' or el DF—'el de EFF-e' "».
>
> Era un hombre extraño. (513)
>
> Behold the tale that the elders used to tell.
>
> "In a time that none can now count, that none can remember . . . one day a man came walking that was said to be half mummy and half metal to 'Mexico City is known to Mexicans simple as México—pronounced 'MEH-kee-ko." If they want to distinguish from Mexico the country they call it either 'la ciudad de México' or el DF—'el de EFF-e.' "
>
> He was a strange man.

At this point the novel has become myth (the passage in English is mentioned repeatedly throughout the novel), and we see how the cyborg image has combined with passages from the narrative to create the mythology of Mantrax, the god that the robot seeks. In so doing, the novel invites a comparison between the grafting and editing that occurs as history and story are fused in myth, as organic flesh and technological prosthesis are fused in cyborg, and as disparate scenes are cut together in film. Indeed, the narrative structure that moves us from a young, dying man, to a corpse, to a robot, outlines the evolution of the posthuman. *Mantra* as a novel sees in the cyborg a body peculiarly prepared to mediate and explore that process, one whose essential hybridity and fused nature helps understand identity and myth in the media age.

By so doing, we see a reimagination of the cyborg figure in Argentine narrative (this is another graft of sorts, it feels odd, and necessarily so, to read this as an Argentine novel though it is by the writer whose earlier work includes *Historia argentina*). Because of this reimagination, I think we need to be careful of reading this as merely a novel about what happens when you watch too much TV. For example, Edmundo Paz Soldán has observed that,

> Rodrigo Fresán explora en *Mantra* la intensa relación que existe entre el hombre y los artefactos tecnológicos en la sociedad contemporánea. Gracias a su relación con la máquina (en este caso, la televisión), el ser humano pierde agencia, se convierte en parte de los procesos de intercambio de una sociedad capitalista y globalizada. (2003: 106)
>
> In *Mantra*, Rodrigo Fresán explores the intense relationship that exists between man and technological artifacts in contemporary society. Thanks to their relationship with machines (in this case television), human beings lose agency and are converted into a part of the processes of exchange of a globalized, capitalist society.

While I completely agree that the novel examines this intense relationship, articulating new identities that arise from that communication of information between body and mass-media machine, I would argue, however, that the novel goes much further than simply describing the dehumanizing effect of that relationship. Instead, Fresán takes the intimate interactions between human and television to posit a new kind of globalized body, one that is neither dehumanized nor rehumanized, but posthumanized. In so doing, he reconfigures the Argentine cyborg from unholy monster or scarred survivor to citizen of a new global culture in need of a new, cybernetic, mythology.

Fresán presents another vision of this globalized, cybernetic-ized culture in his short story "Señales captadas en el corazón de una fiesta" [Signals Captured in the Heart of a Party]—this time on a scale less grand than that of new mythologies and future civilizations. The story, published in Fresán's collection *La velocidad de las cosas* (1998) [The Speed of Things], earlier served as Fresán's contribution to the *McOndo* anthology. In it,

we find a series of reflections on what it means to be a "party animal," with considerations of popular music (David Byrne, The Pet Shop Boys) as well as drug culture and dealing with AIDS. The narrator functions as a collector of voices and thoughts that occur at parties, reporting snippets of conversations and situations that are overheard as one moves through the dialogues that constitute the series of parties that is one never-ending party.

The story begins with a first-person narrator musing on the titular signals:

> Aquí están, estas son, las señales captadas en el corazón de una fiesta. Las metálicas y frías señales. El derrotado himno de batalla, la triunfante marcha fúnebre, los sombreros en la mano.
>
> Me gusta oír las señales. La cabeza ligeramente torcida sobre un cuello que apenas la sostiene. Sísifo separa unas de otras con cuidado, las ordena por color y por peso, y en seguida empuja y sigue empujando montaña arriba. (65)
>
> Here they are, these are the signals captured at the heart of a party. The cold and metallic signals. The defeated battle hymn, the triumphant funeral march with hats in hand.
>
> I like to hear the signals. The head lightly twisted on a neck that can barely keep it up. Sisyphus separates them carefully, puts them in order by color and weight and then pushes and keeps pushing them up the mountain.

The accumulation of organic and metallic body parts here is impressive. The heart of the party gives way to the receptor of signals, in this case a head too big for its body that appears to presage Martín Mantra's headgear. Fresán intercuts the list of body parts with signals, suggesting a mechanical nature to this biologically described party—signals that are particularly technological given their cold metallic nature. As the signal collector, a grotesque body, is able to listen to these mechanical signals, we see quite clearly the kind of relational dynamics that constitute the posthuman identity for which Hayles argues. While the party and its participants are biological, with bodies and organs, the messages that circulate among these bodies are

mechanical—making not only the narrator's body but also the party itself a truly cybernetic organism. As the story continues the narrator makes frequent reference to the signals, sometimes as "latidos digitales" [digital heartbeats] of the aforementioned heart of the party; at other times as more traditional radio signals that are broadcast and then lost in the ether. In all cases, we see the development of a discourse of the technological as a way to describe the supposedly organic system of parties.

These parties appear as the cause of the metaphorical transformation of human to cybernetic partygoer. The narrator explains his particular power as radio receiver, "Me refiero a aquellas señales que sólo puede captar alguien para quien las fiestas han dejado de ser interesantes. Ese al que las fiestas ya nunca le resultarán dignas de interés salvo para compararlas con las *otras* fiestas" [I refer to those signals that can only be picked up by someone for whom parties have ceased to be interesting. He for whom parties will never be interesting except as they are compared with the *other* parties] (65). This boredom with the party culture is what attunes the narrator's receptors and qualifies him to receive the titular party signals. This process extends beyond the auditory nature of radio signals and converts the narrator into a radio/camera/television watcher as the story progresses:

> Miro las fiestas como si fueran cuadros. Las miro y las fijo en el negativo invertido de mi retina cansada. Basta que cierre los ojos para sentir que las fiestas comienzan a desaparecer del mismo modo en que yo, con la siempre elegante lentitud de lo inexorable, he ido desapareciendo para el resto de los concurrentes, que ahora prefieren mirar para otro lado antes que concentrarse en el hombre invisible . . .
>
> Si, es posible que me hayan visto hace poco en los bordes de alguna fiesta, apartando enseguida la mirada—otro cuadro—, negando mi existencia como se niega una noticia desagradable al cambiar de canal. Zapping. (66)
>
> I look at parties as if they were paintings. I look at them and fix them in the inverted negative of my tired retina. It suffices to close my eyes to feel that the parties begin to disappear the same way that I, with the always elegant slowness of the inexorable,

> have been disappearing for the rest of the partygoers, who now prefer to look away than to concentrate on the invisible man.
>
> Yes, it is possible that they have seen me on the edge of some party, looking away very quickly—another painting—, denying my existence like one denies bad news by changing the channel. Zapping.

The narrator does not merely receive the conversations and sounds of the party as signals; he also captures the images, his tired retina is described in its camera-like functions as he looks and fixes each scene, recording it as he did the overheard sounds. This process erases him as a man, making him invisible but also converting him into television. That is, his ability to receive signals makes him more akin to the quotidian device that also receives and fixes image and sound. For that reason, the logical response to the narrator at parties is "zapping"; that is, the other partygoers change him as they would a channel.

This combination of party as cybernetic organism and partygoer as human television suggests the development of a posthuman society that Fresán would use *Mantra* to mythologize. Furthermore, the story employs this cybernetic discourse as merely a semiotic system for describing the human condition. That it, to this point in the story, the technological imagery is not explicit or literal as we saw in *Mantra*; it merely functions as the most appropriate way to express the condition that the narrator seeks to describe.

However, the story takes a supernatural turn at the end, when we discover that the narrator is actually a ghost, the spirit of a man who has died of AIDS and continues to frequent the parties that he had attended when alive. While the spirit suggests a more fantastic arrangement than the implied science fiction of the technological metaphors, Fresán quickly resituates his ghost story within a cyborg matrix. As the narrator adopts the dead Willi's voice, he encounters first a deformed girl—una de ellas parece macrocefálica, una cabeza inmensa sobre un cuerpito delgado (89) [one of them seems macrocephalic, an immense head on a thin tiny body]—in reality a girl wearing a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle costume. The combination of animal and human, and especially the oversized head, both anticipates the

wrestler's reaction to Mantra as it simultaneously emphasizes Haraway's inclusion of human/animal couplings as an element of cyborg identity. Willi then remembers his death, a collapse that happens as his parents play a game based on Morse code that mirrors Willi's conversion from flesh to transmission, his spirit sending signals through the Ouija board that serves as a fixture in the parties he attended. This image culminates in Willi's final messages: "Me muero. Me despido. Cambio y fuera. Fin de transmisión" (90) [I'm dying, I say goodbye. Over and out. End of transmission].

The story ends with more reflections from the dead Willi, who appears to exist because of the series of films that were made of him and his family before he passed away. Fresán again (or rather, first) works through the themes of memory as film and of the reality of the past as that which is recorded on celluloid. Willi's afterlife is proscribed by his continued existence as a visual and audio signal, as the digital and analog reproduction of his once organic life. Among other themes the story presents a reflection on the role of technology in the preservation of life and the necessary conversion of organic life into television signal, a conversion that he would then mythologize in *Mantra*.

From the rather grand gestures we find in *Mantra* and the supernatural "Señales" that anticipated Fresán's novel, we move to smaller, more personalized movements in Alberto Fuguet's popular novel *Por favor, rebobinar*, a novel whose title was so grounded in the video culture of the 1990s that it has already become obsolete (as we no longer rewind DVDs or computer files). The novel, a series of meditations, reviews, interviews, and stories based on the lives of a group of twenty-something middle-class Chileans, is replete with the mass media made evident in the "Be kind, rewind" instructions of the title. Film, television, radio, newspapers, and magazines all provide the material that constitutes the lives of this young Chilean middle class at the beginning of the post-Pinochet era. This focus on mass media in the novel helped define the McOndo moment, as I noted earlier, and has also given a focus to the majority of the criticism that has been written about Fuguet's narrative. What this criticism has missed is the relationship between mass media

and technological identity that becomes clear only in the consideration of the posthuman characters that appear in the novel. These posthumans are not, however, the camera-headed filmmakers and origin-seeking robots of *Mantra*; the closest these characters get to the science fiction denizens of Fresán's world is by watching the same movies that Mantra and his cohort watched. Nevertheless, we find a series of moments where Fuguet's characters can only express their experiences in posthuman terms; the mass media world that they inhabit has reconfigured them as consciousnesses dependent upon prosthetic imagery for the articulation of self.

The majority of criticism dedicated to *Por favor, rebobinar* has looked specifically at the Lucas, the aspiring film critic who lives through the films that he watches—principally videotapes that he rents. Over the course of his narration, he indicates that he best understands his life as a film and that his memories and his interaction with the world make most sense when taken as elements of a script. This positioning of subjectivity within a cinematic matrix helps set up a series of articulations of a posthuman-like identity, where a pronounced identification with film bleeds into a body configured by the technological tools used to make that film.

> Así, creo, funciona un poco mi mente: más que creer que los ojos de Dios siempre me están mirando, siento que lo que tengo dentro del cerebro, conectado a los ojos, es una cámara que registra cada uno de mis actos. Creo que cuando uno se muere, se va a un gran microcine que está en el cielo y, junto a un comité ad hoc, uno se sienta a ver lo que ya vio.
>
> Eso se llama el infierno.
>
> Algunos, supongo, creen que es el cielo. (19)

> That, I believe, is a little like how my mind works: rather than believe that the eyes of God are always watching me, I feel like what I have inside my brain, connected to my eyes, is a camera that records each of my acts. I believe that when someone dies, they go to the great theater in the sky and, with an ad hoc committee, one sits and sees what they already saw. That is hell. Some, I suppose, believe that it's heaven.

A couple of pages later, he remarks:

> Soy un maestro del zapping, de la cultura de la apropiación. Digamos que afano, pirateo, robo sin querer. Es como si tuviera un digital sampler en mi mente que funcionara a partir de puras imágenes. No soy un tipo creativo. No invento, absorbo. Trago. (22)
>
> I am a master of zapping, of the culture of appropriation. Let's say that I steal, I pirate, I rob without meaning to. It's as though I had a digital sampler in my mind that functions with pure images. I'm not a creative type, I don't invent, I absorb, I swallow.

Ana María Amar Sánchez's take on these passages is that they form the manifest of the novel, that with Lucas's absorption of popular culture we see a narrative cannibalization of the novel as just one more artifact of the same pop-culture system of representation (210). What I would propose as an extension of the critical consideration of the novel and of Lucas specifically is the way in which Lucas's attempts to articulate his own subjectivity result in an elaboration of a posthuman body where memory is able to occur as well as the sociocultural implications of such a body.

In the first passage, we observe a dynamic between technology and flesh, surveillance and behavior. In Lucas's mass media world, the camera functions on several levels. At first, we see a connection between a god that controls all humans' actions, a kind of superego/Panopticon that disciplines the organic body by means of constant surveillance. Lucas then modernizes the religious overtones of his musings, transforming "los ojos de Dios" into a camera, a technological device that fulfills the same function as the divine—therefore configuring a mass media world where celluloid is the creator/judge. Notwithstanding the metaphysical implications of such a transformation, what interests me most in this passage is the insertion of the camera into Lucas's head. Lucas combines the final judgment story with a cybernetic image, one in which his brain becomes cyborg as his cerebral memory centers are configured as a camera that

records. In that moment, Lucas's organic body ceases to exist separately from the film technology with which he has interacted for so long. In this sense, Lucas's lifestyle has contaminated his sense of self profoundly. If we follow (and bend) the implications of the film and television theory associated with suture and flow to their cybernetic ends we find that the spectators are programmed by their experience with mass media to conceive of themselves as cameras, constantly seeing and recording the world through the eyes of that machine. In the case of Lucas, his long relationship with his television has trained him to experience the world as a camera would. On this level, it is not important that Lucas is not a literal cyborg like those we see in more traditional science fiction (though we should recognize that Lucas cites films from science fiction frequently). What is important is that Lucas no longer conceives of himself as separate from his prosthetic memory machine. What we see is a shift in thinking that follows the last portion of Katherine Hayles's description of posthuman thinking that I cited earlier: "In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (3). Lucas, as he constructs an identity based on cybernetic prosthesis and, in particular, presents his ability to interact with reality as based on that same prosthesis, also presents himself as a part of the evolving "posthuman view."

Regarding the second passage (about zapping), Lucas's technological absorption develops his posthuman identity in various directions. He repeats the idea of a cybernetic brain, one that is extended to various characters over the course of the novel. (Indeed, the title itself, in addition to being the phrase that one finds on a rental VCR cassette, also refers to using this prosthetic memory organ to keep from forgetting.) Beyond that image, Lucas foregrounds the role of "zapping" within the consumerist logic that the character advances over the course of his section of the novel. This time, the mechanical brain is associated with the reception of the televisual image rather than its production as was the case with the camera eyes of the first passage. Now the video head is a receptive machine, a digital sampler that records a variety of images that are seen thanks to

the use of another machine—a remote control that exercises a cybernetic effect not only on his body but also on culture in general, especially if we take into account Sarlo's analysis of zapping. What unites the two descriptions, beyond the prosthetic brain, is the function that the organ performs. As both camera and digital sampler, the robot that lives inside Lucas remembers experiences by recording them and saving them to tape. The technological and artificial nature of these memories appears to be the result of their conversion into the organic celluloid matrix that is Lucas's brain.

If Lucas were the only metaphorical cyborg in the novel, we could use his particular conceptualization of posthuman identity as yet another support for the thesis that Christian Gundermann has presented about the very conservative posture he sees taken in the novel, especially when compared to the Argentine writer Manuel Puig. Lucas is presented as just one more "couch potato," infected by the technology for which he feels an unhealthy attraction and identification. If we remember the cyborg trope in the traditional science fiction I mentioned, the standard version of the cyborg is the accidental and traumatic result of uncontrolled technophilia. Rather than exercise the subversive possibilities that Haraway has argued as inherent to the cyborg this traditional science fiction figure is a cautionary tale, a victim of the scientific hubris of Doctor Frankenstein—a warning to those who would disregard the limits on creation imposed by the divine. Even the AI robots and machines of the Terminator films, of the Matrix, or even the recent remake of Battlestar Galactica are threats to humanity because human pride in technology produced robots that were too good at what they did. The cyborg that Fuguet describes, however, does not fit within this model so easily and not merely because it is not a literal creation of metal and flesh. Lucas is a metaphorical cyborg that does not function as designed. He is a broken robot, so to speak. Note what the character expresses as he speaks of his own ability to remember, an ability supposedly facilitated by the prosthetic organ that we have discussed.

> Lo único que tengo relativamente claro es que si no siento, si ya no me involucro en cosas que me importan, si ya no pueden

> usarme como depositario de nada, no es del todo a propósito. Pero tampoco es una pose. O algo planeado. No es como si hubiera apretado un botón, todo se borró, y listo: adiós a mis sensaciones. Simplemente pasaron a mi lado, se fueron. A veces, incluso, trato de que vuelvan. Intento rebobinar, pero me es imposible. (29)
>
> The only thing that I have relatively clear is that if I don't feel, if I no longer involve myself in things that I care about, if they can no longer use me as a deposit of anything, it's not completely on purpose. It's not a pose either, or something planned. It's not as though someone had pressed a button and everything was erased, goodbye to all my feelings. It's just that everything passed by me, it's gone. Sometimes, in fact, I try to make them come back. I try to rewind, but for me it's impossible.

His inability to feel is connected, not with the insensitivity stereotypically associated with those that watch too much television and are isolated by that technology but with something very different. The button, that implement so important for a literal cyborg, does not receive the blame that Lucas assigns as he tries to understand his situation. The problem is that his electronic archive simply does not work. He is unable to rewind, unable to access the information that his prosthetic organ, be it camera or digital sampler, should have archived electronically. The problem from which Lucas suffers is not that he is a cyborg in a world of humans; it is that he is not cyborg enough, he is not able to use his electronic memory to access the past in the way that others supposedly can.

This vision of cyborg identity is developed in the title of Baltasar Daza's novel, Daza being the pop novelist who appears at various points in *Por favor, rebobinar*. The title of his novel is, unoriginally, *Disco Duro* [Hard Disk], and Daza describes his novel in the following terms:

> Es una idea, un juego. Es moderno, remite a los computadores y a los discos, o a los compacts, debería decir. Y lo duro, lo *heavy*, tiene que ver con la agresión y las drogas. Pero, más que nada, tiene que ver con nuestra memoria colectiva, con nuestro inconsciente, con aquello que tenemos insertado en el cerebro y no podemos borrar. (264)

> It's an idea, a game. It is modern and it evokes Computers and disks, compact discs, I should say. And the hard, the heavy, has to do with aggression and drugs. But, more than anything, it has to do with our collective memory, with our unconscious, with that which we have inserted in our brains and that we can't erase.

What Daza postulates is a cybernetic condition that extends throughout human identity, a situation in which the only way to conceive of a collective memory is through technology. Lucas is, then, one more cyborg among a generation of posthuman beings, his prosthetic organ simply does not function like the rest of his generation. In this sense, the parasitical relationship that Lucas has with film impedes his function as a posthuman rather than facilitating it. In so doing, Fuguet articulates an innovative vision of identity quite far afield of the typical neo-luddite reaction of the conservative stance.

Andoni Llovet's long chapter develops Daza's vision second-hand (the model and aspiring writer reports on Daza's novel in its embryonic form over the course of his own autobiography). Throughout the chapter Llovet revisits the title of Daza's masterpiece, relaying Daza's own views on "Disco Duro" even as he adapts and expands it to fuel his own thought on the subconscious and on the artistic process. Llovet first mentions the novel as a long-promised text that has yet to appear, one that Daza mentions to his friends from writing classes but will not let them read:

> Ése va a ser el epígrafe *Disco Duro*, la gran novela de Baltasar Daza. *Caída libre* es uno de los temas de Pascal Barros. Es el tema favorito de Baltasar. Daza lleva años trabajando en *Disco Duro*, pero nunca le ha mostrado nada a nadie. Sí ha contado cosas. Va a ser, se supone, su trabajo más autobiográfico y toma como punto de partida su familia.
>
> —Quiero hacer una saga, pero sin caer en la fórmula del realismo mágico. Puro realismo virtual, pura literatura McOndo. Algo así como *La casa de los espíritus* sin los espíritus. (145)
>
> That will be the epigraph of *Hard Disk*, Baltasar Daza's great novel. *Free Fall* was one of Pascal Barros's songs. Baltasar's favorite song. Daza has spent years working on *Hard Disk* but

> he's never shown any of it to anyone. He has told some of it. It's going be, one assumes, his most autobiographical work and it takes his family as a starting point.
>
> —I want to do a saga, but without recurring to the formula of magical realism. Pure virtual realism, pure McOndo literature. Something like *The House of the Spirits* without the spirits.

The novel serves as an example of Fuguet's McOndo group, with emphasis on the rejection of magical realism as well as the sacred writers of the Chilean canon. The phrase that most attracts our attention, especially considering the title's later posthuman implications, is "realismo virtual," referring to Daza's attempt to distance his work from Allende's as well as the international market's view of what Latin American literature should be. With the phrase virtual realism, we see a new vision of literature constructed that associates it with virtual reality worlds. In that sense not only does the literary act anticipate the virtual computer worlds that we would later see so well explored in Edmundo Paz Soldán's work, but Fuguet suggests that there is no distinction—that the literary virtual and the technological virtual are ultimately the same. In that sense the novel's title not only suggests a way for thinking about posthuman memory but also a way to conceive of the entire artistic process.

In this same passage, Llovet reports further on Daza's view of the virtual nature of the artistic process,

> Este apoyo, más el contrato con una editorial y la ayuda de una agente, me daría el suficiente ánimo y seguridad para sacar de mi disco duro cerebral un montón de materia prima disponible con la cual lanzarme a escribir todas esas novelas que nadie, por cobarde o mediocre, ha tenido la ocurrencia de escribir. (146)
>
> This support, plus the contract with the press and the help of an agent, will give me the needed will and security to access from my own cerebral hard disk a ton of available original material with which I can begin writing all the novels that no one, because they're cowards or mediocre, has been able to write.

Here Daza links not only the artistic product with virtual realities, but also the process of literary production with cyborg

embodiment. The business aspect of literature, invoked by the agent and the contract, become the market keys to the technological organ of creativity that resides within Daza's cerebrum. This fusion of art, business, and the metaphor of the posthuman body creates a posthuman reality in which the cybernetic is a state to which artists aspire, a state from which Lucas finds himself isolated because his organs do not function properly.

Llovet continues in this mode later in his narrative as he continues to muse on the creative process,

> ¿De dónde salió esto? Ni siquiera me acordaba de que tenía todo esto adentro, guardado, escondido.
>
> ¿Escondido?
>
> Rebobinado.
>
> *Así que esto es lo que llaman inconsciente, ¿ah?*
>
> Me acuerdo que una vez leí en un *New York Review of Books* que tenía Balta un largo artículo sobre creatividad, rockeros y drogadicción. Algo así. Estaba basado en Jung, el psiquiatra favorito de Sting, que lo puso de moda con *Synchronicity*. Esta información inútil la aportó Gonzalo McClure. El asunto es que el artículo analizaba y exploraba el por qué un tipo—un artista, más bien—crea. Compone, escribe letras, qué sé yo. La conclusión final era que la creatividad salía del inconsciente. Nada nuevo ahí. Lo interesante, lo que a mí más me llamó la atención y aterró, fue la definición que el tal Jung le daba al inconciente. Según él, es todo lo que sabemos pero que no estamos pensando. (1999: 172)

> Where did this come from? I don't even remember that I had all this inside, kept safe and hidden.
>
> Hidden?
>
> Rewound.
>
> So that's what they call the unconscious, right?
>
> I remember that one time I read an article in a *New York Review of Books* that Balta had about creativity, rock musicians, and addiction. Something like that. It was based on Jung, Sting's favorite psychiatrist, that he made fashionable with Synchronicity. This useless information was given by Gonzalo McClure. The idea was that the article analyzed and explored why a guy—an artist rather, creates. He composes, writes lyrics, whatever. The

> final conclusion was that creativity came from the unconscious. Nothing new there. What was interesting, what caught my attention and scared me was the definition Jung gave of the unconscious. According to him, it is everything that we know but that we are not thinking.

Llovet's discussion of Jung and the role of the unconscious is rather basic; he is, after all, merely processing what he read in the newspaper. What is telling is the fact that his access to the artistic subconscious is controlled by the word "Rebobinado." Fuguet underscores this with the very layout of the writing. The telegraphic style of the beginning of the passage reproduces the breaks in movements that the act of rewinding presupposes. Hence, not only does Llovet invoke "Rebobinar" but the text's structure also invokes the action. Fuguet then accompanies this structural evocation with a memory; Llovet's memory functioning now that he has been rewound.

The culmination of Llovet's musings on Jung, Sting, and the subconscious makes the posthuman elements of the process even more clear:

> O sea, es todo aquello de lo que alguna vez tuvimos conciencia, pero ya se nos olvidó. Algo así como el disco duro de los computadores. El disco duro que todos llevamos dentro, seamos compatibles o no. La luz se te puede cortar, te pueden robar el Mac, un virus te atacó, da lo mismo, tu disco duro sigue adentro, contigo, vayas donde vayas, hagas lo que hagas. (172)
>
> That is, it is everything of which we were once conscious, but that we have since forgotten. Something like the hard disk of computers. The hard disk that we all have inside, whether we're compatible or not. The electricity can go out, they can steal your Mac, you can get a virus, it doesn't matter, your hard disk continues inside, wherever you go, whatever you do.

Llovet, then, as a being that must be rewound, can only find the vocabulary to describe the human condition in computers. And yet the metaphor of the hard drive does not suggest a situation in which the organic is completely replaced by the technological. Humans are not better off as robots. Llovet's human hard drive improves on the purely mechanical original

in that it cannot be stolen, it cannot be erased by a power outage, and it is impervious to computer viruses. What we see proposed here is the posthuman as the condition that solves both organic shortcomings and technological drawbacks.

Fuguet strengthens this interpretation with a series of metaphors that develops posthuman identities as various characters. In a specific chain of cybernetic images, we see the description of the city as a technological body. "En el city hay de todo, como una radio interna propia y un sistema de videos las 24 horas, que funciona por room service y que sólo se especializa en cintas raras, de culto (seleccionadas por el joven crítico Lucas García)" (232) [In the city there is a bit of everything, like one's own internal radio and a 24-hour video system, that works by room service and specializes only in rare, cult tapes (selected by the young critic Lucas García)]. Urban identity is transformed here in a network of interrelated machines. Moreover, the archival and surveillance functions of this machine city create a direct connection with Lucas's cyborg body. This particular combination of technology and surveillance situates Fuguet's cyborg city alongside that proposed by Jesús Martín Barbero:

> [es un] mareamiento de circuitos y trayectos que de-velan en las cibernéticas metrópolis actuales de ciudades invisibles: místicas, esotéricas, vivenciales. Y desde las cartografías catastrales construidas *desde arriba*, y a las que "nada escapa" como el panóptico aquel que estudiara Foucault, sólo que ahora su centro es móvil—la cámara colocada en el helicóptero—. (2003: 13)
>
> [It is a] dizzying collection of circuits and trajectories that is uncovered in the real cybernetic metropolises of invisible cities, mystics, esoteric and filled with life. And it is from the maps constructed from above and that nothing escapes like the Panopticon that Foucault studied, though now the center is mobile, the camera is in the helicopter.

The perspective that Fuguet contributes to this articulation of the city is the way in which the body of the posthuman being becomes the map of the cybernetic metropolis, the fusion of flesh and prosthesis as an exact replica of what is found in the cities that Martín Barbero describes. In fact, Fuguet expresses the connection between body and city explicitly when he

writes: "Las calles de la ciudad son tus arterias, en los parques se esconde tu pasado y entre los sitios baldíos se reparte tu corazón" (229–30) [The streets of the city or your arteries, your past hides in the parks and your heart in the places]. In this statement, we see the way in which the organic elements of the body function as a map of the streets. This combines with the earlier passage in which places in the city employ a surveillance technology that evokes specifically the mechanical brain that Lucas describes and to which he alludes constantly with his references to a "rewinding" memory.

The novel ends with the chapter, "Gonzalo McClure: Adulto contemporáneo." McClure, half of a couple that is expecting their first child, reflects on the past that he shared with several of the characters who have told their stories over the course of the novel as he simultaneously distances himself from them with the formation of a "traditional" relationship (i.e., heterosexual, monogamous, with children). Gundermann highlights, obviously, this as clear evidence of the conservative vision that Fuguet develops over the course of the novel. As I mentioned previously, Gundermann has a basis for his argument, especially if we view Lucas as an infected couch potato. In fact, McClure mentions one character, the famous musician/actor Pascal Barros, in a situation that suggests that he has successfully abandoned a cybernetic aesthetic: "Pascal no toca en vivo hace tiempo. Ahora está abocado a grabar su nuevo disco: Perdidos, interferidos, desenchufados. Es, claro, un disco acústico, unplugged. Tiene más de veinte temas listos" (383) [Pascal hasn't played live for a while now. He's recording a new record: Lost, interfered, with and unplugged. It is, of course, an acoustic disk, unplugged. He has more than twenty songs ready]. After so many "plugged-in" bodies the fact that Barros is now playing acoustic music suggests a certain de-evolution, at least in posthuman terms. That noted, Lucas is not actually a couch potato infected by technology, he is the result of broken prostheses and, within that logic, Fuguet creates a continuity between the ubiquitous posthumanity in the early part of the novel and a continued cybernetic discourse in this rather nostalgic denouement. McClure notes that his prosthetic memory organ continues to function: "Sólo el pasado, con sus hechos y sus recuerdos, podrá esclarecer lo

que hoy nos parece tan enredado y oscuro. Quizás. Pero entiendo a los que se niegan a rebobinar hacia cualquier lado" (380) [Only the past, with its facts and memories, can clear up what today seems so twisted and dark. Maybe. But I can understand those that refuse to rewind toward any side]. The fact that the act of remembering continues to be expressed in terms of rewinding suggests that this particular aspect of the posthuman condition endures, in spite of the evolution of the postadolescents that populate the narrative.

Indeed, the arrival of a child at the end of the novel can be seen within this ongoing exaltation of posthuman identity. McClure is careful to discuss at length his work and his wife's; he in radio, she as a former model, now photographer. In both professions, we see a particular relationship between technology and the body. McClure and the other characters who work in radio comment several times on the displacing effect of the decorporealized voices that are an essential part of any radio personality. Their relationship with the mass media has let them, to borrow a phrase from cyberpunk, move away from the meat of the body and toward mass conversation with their listeners. When we combine that with the posthuman discourse of the novel, we see McClure as yet another articulation of the changing relationship between bodies and technology that occur in the realm of the mass media. Importantly, Pía, McClure's wife, also works in the production of image, in the conversion of body into photograph, much as we saw in the novels of Paz Soldán and Prado. Moreover, Pía has moved from one side of the camera to the other as she changes professions, creating a situation in which she always appears defined by the camera, but ending in a place where the camera functions as her prosthetic eye rather than one in which she offers her body up to the consuming gaze of the lens. That these two would procreate, then, suggests the arrival of an audiovisual child that combines the professions of both parents. The conservative ending that Gundermann dismisses is also the arrival of a new kind of posthuman, one that combines both mass media technology with a heteronormative nuclear family.[2]

In Fuguet's subsequent fiction, we see a more detailed exploration of the intersections of technology and the formation

of "traditional" families. The story "Hijos" [Children], from his 2005 collection, *Cortos* [Shorts], displays just such an example where Fuguet examines the dynamics of parenthood implicit in the relationship a married couple has with their computers. The story follows the lives of a couple in their late twenties, content with their childless life. Over the course of the narrative, they meet an elderly couple, also childless, and become friends with them, sharing films and giving them a Macintosh laptop. The elderly couple receives the gift with some trepidation, and then enjoys what it has to offer—the elderly man being a film scholar who is amazed with all that the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) has to offer. The story ends unremarkably, the elderly couple's cat passes away and life continues. Fuguet structures the story in chapters with sections, the chapter numbers appearing in the screen of a laptop that appears at the top of the page, the sections divided by Apple Computer's trademark .

The posthuman nature of the story again functions on an implicit level (aside from the ubiquitous references to Macintosh), underpinning much of the younger couple's relationship even as it begins to suggest ways to understand the relationship between film and interpersonal relationships. Near the beginning of the story, the narrator describes his relationship with his wife Carla.

> Somos una pareja joven, sin hijos. Lo de joven es relativo. Ninguno de los dos ha cumplido los treinta, es cierto, pero llevamos siete años juntos y no hemos sentido comezón algún. Diría que somos más *ambient* que *transient*...
>
> Nos gusta surfear la red tomados de la mano. Tenemos un computador al lado del otro. Recientemente pasamos a banda ancha. Contamos con varios Apple. Los coleccionamos. Es donde más gastamos, pero nos parece más una inversión que un despilfarro. Nos gusta renovarlos cada tres años....A veces le envío emails cariñosos y le escribo el tipo de cosas que no me atrevo a decirle en persona. A ella le gusta tomar fotos digitales a cosas en las que nadie se fija: vitrinas, letreros, carteleras de cine. Cuando no podemos estar juntos, chateamos vía Messenger. (117)
>
> We're a young couple with no children. But being "young" is relative. It's true neither of us has turned thirty yet, but we've

> been together for seven years and haven't felt any real itching desire to start a family. I'd say we're more ambient than transient. . . . We like to hold hands while surfing the net, which is why we've got our computers set up next to each other. We recently went to broadband, and use several Apple products. We collect them. It's where much of our budget goes, but we look at it as more of an investment than a waste. We like upgrading every three years. . . . Sometimes I'll send her affectionate emails in which I describe things that I'd never dare to reveal in person. She likes to snap digital photos of things that people usually overlook: display cabinets, billboards, cinema marquees. When we can't be together, we chat over Instant Messenger. (125)

Clearly what makes the couple remarkable is the extent to which the Macintosh computers mediate their relationship. Email and chats provide a virtual intimacy at times more direct than that which they enjoy when physically together. The image of the two holding hands as they surf the Internet is particularly powerful as it not only displays Katherine Hayles's image of the posthuman computer user but it combines that with the interpersonal dynamics of a married couple. Fuguet produces a kind of triad in which the human couple commune with each other even as they fuse with the Internet through their laptops. For that reason, it should not surprise us that they renew their computers every three years. Fuguet's image of human/human/computer fusion naturally would produce metaphorical children; in this case, the updated PowerBooks.

As the younger couple befriends an elderly film professor and his wife, Fuguet begins to use elements of film theory as an engine for the exploration of interpersonal dynamics in an age of computers and cinema. In one scene that occurs near the beginning of the friendship, we see the beginning of this theorization,

> Un par de semanas atrás, el doctor nos mostró una vejada copia en 16 mm de *El acorazado Potemkin*. Si bien el curso no incluía cine ruso, Paternostro Villalba usó la obra de Eisenstein para ilustrarnos dos ideas que, para él, son claves: el montaje como instrumento revolucionario y el cine como manifiesto. La famosa escena de las escaleras de Odessa me recordó la secuencia

> en la estación de tren de Chicago de *Los Intocables* con Kevin Costner. Se lo hice saber. Paternostro no sabía de qué hablaba. Tampoco conocía, ni de referencia, el trabajo de Brian De Palma. (121–22)

> Two weeks ago, the professor showed us an old 16mm copy of *Battleship Potemkin*. Though the syllabus didn't include any Russian films, Paternostro Villalba used Eisentstein's work to illustrate two ideas he felt were crucial: the use of cinema as a revolutionary instrument, and cinema as manifesto. The famous scene on the steps leading to the Odessa harbor immediately reminded me of the Chicago train station sequence in *The Untouchables* with Kevin Costner. I pointed out the connection, but Paternostro didn't know what I was talking about. He didn't know—nor had he heard of—Brian De Palma's work. (130)

Eisenstein's appearance in the story advances the theme of an implicit posthumanity in a way similar to the concept of posthuman cleavage that I introduced in chapter 3 of this book. That is, Eisenstein here functions as a metonymy of his theories on cinema and montage, specifically on the unique importance of editing in a cinematic aesthetic. Eisenstein's insistence on the power of the cut in the creation of meaning becomes a metaphor for Fuguet's thinking on the ways in which humans join together in interpersonal relationships.

The narrator's response to the class is instructive, as is Paternostro's use of Eisenstein as an example in a class not explicitly about Russian film. Paternostro introduces Eisenstein as a foreign element, as an edited-in sequence that alters the meaning of the course by highlighting the revolutionary potential of montage. The narrator then repeats this move, using the Eisenstein sequence in conjunction with his own cinematic background, the more contemporary De Palma film, *The Untouchables*. The narrator has performed an Eisensteinian operation in which an editing-in of the subsequent film enriches the Eisenstein original, an idiosyncratic move certainly as the De Palma film was clearly referencing Eisenstein. This series of cinematic moves in a collection of short stories titled *Cortos* in Spanish emphasizes not only the cinematic aesthetic that Fuguet develops in the short stories, but also opens up the possibility of

thinking of the shorts as a montage, as a series of cleavages that produce meaning at the seam of the cut.

The subsequent development of the story shows how this logic then controls both the structure and the thematics that continue. The shared interest in cinema brings the younger and older couples together; the younger couple gives the Paternostros an old laptop and the lives of all four begin to change. The editing together of the generations produces alterations in meaning even as it suggests a way to understand the relationship of technology with the lives of the characters. That is, just as these lives are joined through cinematic cuts, the relationships between bodies are joined at sutures forged by computers. Here we return to the image of the younger couple surfing the web and holding hands, but also to the Apple trademarks that divide and join the sections of the story. Fuguet's achievement in the story is, then, not so much in the story of two couples whose lives are changed by one another, but in the way in which he uses cinematic aesthetics and an implicit posthuman context to narrate what is ultimately a Hollywood feel-good story.

Fuguet's narrative provides a vision of posthuman life much more radical than one would expect and in a much more subtle way than one sees in posthuman literature, certainly more subtle than Fresán. Without any science fiction figures, no robots, androids, or kids with Mantra-vision, Fuguet constructs a world in which technology permeates and penetrates every character, reconfiguring its auto-discursive strategies in such a way that they cannot articulate their own identities without depending on technological imagery. It may be that these figures do not achieve the subversive ends that Haraway dreams for her cyborgs, but they do present a markedly different cultural reality in which posthuman identity has become a fact of the everyday world.

The McOndo writers have been criticized, extensively, for their perceived lack of political engagement. My analysis here certainly does not do anything to defend them from that criticism. Indeed, what we see in the posthumans that wander through Fresán and Fuguet's novels do not perform the same kind of political and social critiques that we see in other Latin

American novels. We do not see Piglia's traumatized cyborg whose prostheses tell the story of state torture, we do not see the cybernetic products of neoliberalism run amok that Paz Soldán and Courtoisie describe in their recent novels, nor do we see explorations of gender and sexuality that appear in novels by Borinsky, Boullosa, and Prado and that engage more directly North American and European cultural theory. What we see is the construction of narrative realities where posthuman identity is a given, a quotidian condition of a shared experience. The link to memory that we see in both novels becomes not the attempt to remember a traumatic past or to recoup a pretechnological world; what we see is the need to construct a new history, a new mythology in which the posthuman finds its forebears in the machines that helped make them.